

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2011, 5:30 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 2ND FLOOR
CITY HALL BUILDING, 2 CIVIC CENTER PLAZA

CORRECTED

Members Present: 9

Chair Gene Finke, John Karlsruher, Vice-Chair Francisco X. Dominguez, Oscar Silva, James L. Graham, Alisa Jorgensen, Rodolfo Troncoso (5:47 p.m.), David Thackston (6:01 p.m.), Gilbert A. Mendez Jr. (6:08 p.m.)

Members Absent: 0

Planning and Economic Development Staff:

David Coronado, Executive Secretary, Lead Planner; Todd Taylor, Planner; Mariano Soto, Planner, GIS; Marissa Monroy, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Marie Taylor, Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney's Office

1. Meeting Called to Order

Chair Finke called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. Establish Quorum

Quorum established.

3. Discussion and action on:

a. Approval of Minutes: November 30, 2011 Meeting

Mr. Coronado explained that Ms. Cooper requested modifications to the minutes regarding her comments.

Commission Graham requested Staff revise the sentence on Page 9 to read as follows: "He congratulated Commissioner Graham on creating Draft Plan ~~SD-5~~ **CD-1** and noted that the numbers are coming down."

PAGE 7 OF 10, STRIKE THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THE LAST PARAGRAPH

Commissioner Jorgensen requested Staff delete the first sentence of the last paragraph on Page 7. ~~"Commissioner Jorgensen would like to meet with Ms. Cooper."~~

MOTION:

Motion made by Commissioner Graham, seconded by Commissioner Jorgensen and CARRIED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 30, 2011 MEETING MINUTES, AS CORRECTED.

ABSTAIN: Vice-Chair Dominguez and Commissioner Silva

NOT PRESENT: Commissioners Mendez, Thackston and Troncoso

b. Drafting and selection of Districting Plans

Mr. Coronado explained Staff did purchase the new software; however, in order to allow the public to use the software online, the City would need to purchase individual licenses and the cost would be too high. Commissioners and members of the public who wish to create map can make an appointment with Mariano Soto, GIS Planner, Planning Department.

The new maps presented to Commissioners today are labeled CD-2 for Commissioner Jorgensen's map and PD-1 for Ms. Cooper's map.

Chair Finke asked Staff about the configuration of precincts and when the Commissioners can expect the County to complete their process.

Ms. Taylor responded the County will be delaying any changes to their proposed precinct lines and is waiting for a response from the State, possibly within the next two (2) weeks. However, information would not be available until January.

Commissioner Jorgensen asked about the ability to break precincts into census blocks.

Ms. Taylor responded, part of the redistricting guidelines approved by City Council, was to preserve whole voting precincts. If Commissioners were to recommend that voting precincts be broken, then the County must create new precincts which include additional cost for staff, new locations, new polling places, etc. Additionally, the County must go back to the DOJ for approval. In conclusion, it would be more efficient and effective not to change the precincts.

Commissioner Jorgensen stated that she had concerns regarding the configuration of Districts 8 and 1 in PD-1 and that it splits some very strong neighborhood associations. She felt that Mesa Street made for a good geographic boundary and that PD-1 did not seem to maintain the voice of that neighborhood and business communities.

Commissioner Jorgensen appreciated Ms. Cooper's desire to have three Representatives advocating for the Alameda Corridor but was concerned that Commissioner's would be 'backtracking' since the Commission had decided to grow east to west, rather than north to south. Commissioner Jorgensen added that, in terms of the Alameda Corridor, PD-1

achieved Ms. Cooper's goals while sacrificing some long standing communities on the Westside which concerned her greatly.

Chair Finke noted that PD-1 did not resolve the problematic situation between Districts 1 and 8. While he had concerns that neighborhoods in District 1 would be divided should Precincts 32 and 33 be moved from District 1 to District 8, he wondered if incorporating Precincts 30, 34 and 35 into District 8 might be a solution. Commissioner Karlsruher stated his objections have been noted in past meetings that District 1 would like to retain Precinct 35. He commented on the geographic separation between the Districts.

Chair Finke pointed out that District 1 has to lose population and it seems that Commissioner Karlsruher prefers that the loss comes from the Upper Valley. Commissioner Karlsruher concurred and added, with regard to CD-2, the neighborhoods that District 1 would lose to District 8 in the Upper Valley would not be as disruptive as long as you recognize Neighborhood Associations.

Commissioner Dominguez asked Commissioner Jorgensen which neighborhoods would be disrupted or divided in PD-1. Commissioner Jorgensen commented on the neighborhood associations that would be affected.

Commissioner Jorgensen explained that the real difference between PD-1 and CD-2 was the area between Resler and Westwind and that the two could be very easily merged. Chair Finke suggested Commissioners from Districts 1 and 8 meet and prepare a draft map that resolves their concerns. Commissioner Karlsruher agreed and noted that the issues are not as difficult to remedy.

Chair Finke asked Ms. Taylor if the meeting would be a violation of the Open Meetings Act if the Commissioners. Ms. Taylor explained that Commissioners would be meeting to draft a map to bring back to the Commission; therefore, it would not be a violation of the Open Meetings Act.

Chair Finke asked Commissioner Graham if the maps upset the Tigua solution that had previously been remedied. Commissioner Graham believed both maps were sufficient and in regards to PD-1, Commissioner Graham stated that the small area which is the heart of the Tigua properties would remain within District 6. Mr. Coronado stated that the line was shifted with the new County precinct lines.

Commissioner Graham commended Ms. Cooper for submitting a plan to the Commission. He explained that his observations focused on the aesthetics, meaning two of the nine adopted criteria which were:

Criteria #1 – Where possible, easily identifiable geographic boundaries should be followed.

Criteria #6 – The districts should be compact and composed of contiguous territory. Compactness may contain a functional, as well as geographical dimension.

Commissioner Graham felt that the boundaries of PD-1 could be vastly improved in the matter of compactness and contiguousness and in following definable geographical boundaries which is really concerning. He also felt that the aesthetics of CD-2 were highly desirable noting that the county precincts are designed in a similar manner.

At the map, Commissioner Graham noted that rather than utilizing the easily definable geographical boundary lines, arterials and main thoroughfares, PD-1 shows numerous incongruous boundary lines, specifically mentioning the boundaries between Districts 2 and 4, Districts 8 and 3, and Districts 3 and 7. He also noted that District 8 sprawls even more to the northwest and to the southeast and looks like a gerrymandered district. On the other hand, CD-2 is an improvement on what we have currently, in regard to District 8. Districts 6 and 7 are radically different between PD-1 and CD-2 because PD-1 was primarily concerned with the Alameda Corridor running through three districts, rather than two. In CD-2, the boundaries of Districts 7 and 6 were shifted in order to open them up using easily distinguishable, geographic lines that create compact districts that are squared off, with fewer peninsulas and points and is a much more aesthetically desirable map.

Commissioner Graham referred to another adopted criteria which was:

Criteria #4 – Although it is recognized that existing districts will have to be altered to reflect new population distribution, any districting plan should, to the extent possible, be based on existing districts.

Commissioner Graham explained that CD-2 does move things around quite a bit. With CD-2 future growth within the city limits could be absorbed by Districts 6, 7, and 5 from south to north. While with PD-1, all the future growth would be in Districts 5 and 6. He again recommended that the Commission open up District 7 to capture future growth absorbed by three east lined Districts, as opposed to just Districts 5 and 6 and to avoid headaches for a future commission. In conclusion, Commissioner Graham stated that the Commission must find the most desirable map.

Commissioner Mendez stated that he was open to moving lines in PD-1, but felt that the boundaries of District 3 move too much in CD-2.

Vice-Chair Dominguez stated that aesthetics are not really a standard; contiguity is. Contiguity and compactness are very important as the criteria states:

Criteria #2 – Communities of interest should be maintained in a single district, where possible, and attempts should be made to avoid splitting neighborhoods.

Vice-Chair Dominguez then stated that there is a difference between being disenfranchised and being moved over to a different district. He clarified that if redistricting requires an entire neighborhood to be shifted to another district, that would not be a big concern because the neighborhood would still be intact and would still have

a voice within the district. He stated that he would like Five Points to remain in District 2. Past Commissions did not do District 8 justice; it is the one that looks like a gerrymandered district. He commented that PD-1 is problematic because of District 8 becoming skinnier and longer.

Chair Finke noted that District 8 was substantially carved out of District 1.

Commissioner Jorgensen explained that, in terms of Districts 8 and 1, there is no perfect map; however, she would be happy to sit with Commissioner Karlsruher and prepare a draft map. She also explained that there are serious issues that the Neighborhood Associations in the Upper Valley have been working on, and she did not want to see them divided. She appreciates the diversity in Districts 1 and 8 and does not want monolithic Districts representing only one group.

Ms. Taylor explained the DOJ would be looking at the minority voter strengths or if the strength of the minority voter has been diluted. The DOJ will not be looking at whether or not Commissioners have split a Community of Interest. A Community of Interest is a race neutral districting principle Commissioners can use in terms drawing boundaries.

Commissioner Troncoso explained that he was not present at the previous meeting and would like more time to digest the maps prior to making any public comment.

Commissioner Silva stated the differences between the two maps, regarding District 5, were not extreme. He noted that Commissioners previously agreed that Album Park would need to be moved to another district.

Commissioner Thackston stated that PD-1 shows precinct 60, staying ~~where~~ in District 4 while CD-2 moves that precinct into District 2. So far, that has been the only variation. He stated that he is in favor of opening up a couple of districts to the east and concurred with Commissioner Graham that CD-2 does have more definable boundary lines. The concerns regarding representation of the Alameda Corridor, he felt, may not meet this criteria that the Commission needs to consider.

Regarding scheduling the neighborhood meetings, at the last meeting Commissioners discussed taking CD-1b, SD-5 and maybe SD-1 to the public for public comment. Commissioner Thackston wondered if Commissioners would be including the CD-2 and PD-1 in the public meeting discussion.

Chair Finke responded CD-2 and PD-1 were presented as new maps; Commissioners have not necessarily discarded the other maps.

Commissioner Silva stated he would need more time to look at the Neighborhood Associations to ensure they remain intact, either completely in or out of District 5.

Commissioner Mendez noted that the most active community groups in Precincts 81, 83 and part of 79, were given to District 8 in CD-2. He stated he would be digesting and dissecting the maps further. Commissioner Jorgensen explained that she had tried to preserve the Pasadena, Lincoln Park and San Juan Neighborhood Associations intact even though they were moved to another district.

Commissioner Mendez asked Commissioner Jorgensen if the Kern Place Neighborhood Association was receptive to moving, in its entirety, into District 8. Commissioner Jorgensen responded that she was receptive to them moving into District 8 with the understanding that in the public meetings their voices need to be heard. Chair Finke stated that he was in favor of keeping neighborhoods intact if moved into another district.

Ms. Taylor asked Commissioners if they would like to start making motions, decisions or changes to the CD-2 and PD-1 maps to assist Commissioners Jorgensen and Karlsruher putting together their draft map. If every Commissioner drafts his/her own map, it may be some time before we get to the public.

Commissioner Mendez stated that give and take discussions, between two Districts, would help us in the next meeting. Ms. Taylor responded she is in favor of the discussion and debate happening here in Council Chambers because it is an open meeting.

Commissioner Jorgensen noted that Commissioners began meeting in October and she ~~would~~ **was concerned** that the Commission would become ~~so~~ **too** introspective if ~~that~~ Commissioners do not go out to the public. She concurs with Ms. Taylor's statement that Commissioners take some of these maps and start editing them because the final product will be that much richer and well thought out. Commissioners can get some draft maps out to the public to react to. Commissioner Jorgensen was ~~hesitate~~ **hesitant** to schedule another meeting that would run into January and then another meeting to finally bring maps out to the public, if it even happens then. Commissioners have had plenty of time to take advantage of the resources in the Planning and Legal departments. Commissioner Jorgensen would like Commissioners to start editing and choosing maps and looking at public meeting dates.

Commissioner Jorgensen asked if Commissioners could begin editing the maps, she was feeling very task driven and would like to get something out to the public. Additionally, she reminded Commissioners of the number of speakers who had signed up for public comment.

Commissioner Graham concurred and asked Commissioner Jorgensen to make a motion, he would second it.

Commissioner Jorgensen clarified she would like to get a fairly strong set of maps that we could take to the public, out of this meeting. She explained that, in terms of evolution, CD-2 is really a minor edit of the Commissioner Graham's CD-1A map.

Commissioner Jorgensen noted the biggest change was returning Kern to District 1 and the precinct where Representative Byrd's home is, keeping that within her District. To reiterate, Commissioner Jorgensen would like Commissioners to start editing these maps now, if we could, and then all Commissioners and the public would still have a chance to edit maps once we begin public meetings. She felt that Commissioners would have a much a better map, representative of the will of the people, if we can get some draft maps out for people to react to, poll the public meetings, and then return.

Ms. Taylor stated that it would ideal to take two or three maps to the public, if we go beyond that, we may lose people's ability to focus. Ideally an alternative A and B that the public could react to, Commissioners possibly might approve a third, once it comes back to the Commission based on ~~what you~~ the comments.

Commissioner Mendez concurred and requested that Commissioners allow him another three or four days to talk to some of the community groups and to look at some options that (inaudible) with respect to the western division in District 3, not a complete redo, just some minor tweaking that we would like to consider some different options, as well as between Districts 3 and 7. We will do our best to have something more contiguous, more block format, as we have in PD-2, but I do need some additional time to talk to some of the community groups.

Commissioner Jorgensen asked if Commissioner Mendez would be comfortable going to those groups and those neighborhood associations and encouraging them to attend the public meetings.

Commissioner Mendez would be happy to do that. He understands Commissioner Jorgensen's perspective and point but if we're saying we'd like to proceed tonight with some edits can we start looking at moving our boundary back to something that is more like PD-1 because, at this moment, Commissioner Mendez could not approve that option now.

Commissioner Jorgensen responded if Commissioners feel that two to three maps would be the maximum that we could get good public reaction to, we could make a motion to take PD-1 and CD-2 to the public.

Chair Finke reminded Commissioners that one of the things we need to be aware of is that when we go to the public with our maps, at least from my perspective, each District needs to be concerned about your own District but at the same time, one of the basic principles on which we operate is, including the public comment tonight, is that we look at the entire city. Although we are concerned about each of our Districts, still we have to, when it comes to public comment; need to be fairly comfortable that we are presenting to the public something that will affect the entire city and not just one District.

Commissioner Karlsruher asked if Chair Finke if he would entertain a short break at this point.

MOTION:

Motion made by Mr. Karlsruher, seconded by Vice-Chair Dominguez and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO RECESS FOR FIVE MINUTES.**

MOTION:

Motion made by Mr. Thackston, seconded by Mr. Graham and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO RECONVENE THE MEETING.**

c. January 2012 Districting Commission meeting schedule

Chair Finke noted that he would be out of town for the January 25th meeting. However, it was determined that there would be a quorum for the January 11th and January 25th meetings.

MOTION:

Motion made by Chair Finke, seconded by Commissioner Thackston and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED THAT THE COMMISSION ADOPT THE JANUARY 2012 MEETING SCHEDULE.**

d. Schedule for community meetings to receive comments on proposed plans

Mr. Coronado presented Commissioners with seven pre-selected locations throughout the city.

Ms. Taylor, explained that following the public meetings, Staff would like to have one or two Districting Commission meetings to discuss the public comment and/or feedback. Staff will post the meetings as both general public meetings and Commission meetings, in the event of a quorum. In the past, the meetings were held in the evenings and on Saturdays. The idea is that anyone in the city could attend any meeting; they do not necessarily have to live in that area.

Mr. Coronado asked the Commissioners for guidance in narrowing down the number of locations.

Commissioner Mendez felt seven was a good number.

Commissioner Jorgensen would like to see fewer meeting sites where people from various districts meet and exchange ideas.

Chair Finke stated it may not be convenient to those without private vehicle access.

Commissioner Silva supported, at the most, four public meetings.

Commissioner Dominguez suggested the following locations: Franklin High School, Montwood High School; and Ysleta Elementary School; and if additional meetings are required either Memorial Park Senior Center or the Main Library be considered.

Commissioner Jorgensen suggested the Armijo Recreation Center as the fourth location.

Ms. Taylor noted the Main Library does have a large auditorium that can accommodate a large number of people.

1st MOTION:

Motion made by Commissioner Jorgensen **THAT WE LIMIT THE PUBLIC MEETINGS TO FOUR HELD AT FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL, MONTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL, YSLETA ELEMENTARY, AND THE MAIN LIBRARY.**

Commissioner Mendez requested Commissioners add the Cielo Vista Branch Library location. He explained that Commissioners should have five or six public meetings.

Commissioner Graham suggested, in lieu of Montwood High School and Ysleta Elementary School, holding the public meeting at the Mission Hills Police Center.

Commissioner Karlsruher would like to keep the Main Library public meeting location.

Commissioner Silva suggested the following meeting locations: Franklin High School, Main Library, Cielo Vista Library, and one location on the east side; the Mission Hills Police Center location or Americas High School.

Commissioner Graham responded the High School is a little bit north; Districts 6 and 7 go all the way down to the valley.

2nd MOTION:

Motion made by Commissioner Jorgensen, seconded by Commissioner Thackston and **CARRIED TO LIMIT THE PUBLIC MEETINGS TO FOUR HELD AT: FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL, MEMORIAL PARK SENIOR CENTER, MISSION VALLEY REGIONAL COMMAND, AND CIELO VISTA LIBRARY**

NAY: Commissioner Karlsruher

Motion passed (8-1)

4. Call for Public Comment

Ms. Laurie Cooper, resident of District 7, commented on PD-1.

Ms. Minerva Acosta, resident of District 3, commented on PD-1.

Ms. Arlina Palacios, resident of District 7, asked about Commissioner Graham's comment regarding his statements.

Mr. George Ybarra, asked questions regarding CD-1b.

Chair Finke entertained a motion to adjourn.

MOTION:

Motion made by Commissioner Dominguez to adjourn.

Commissioner Mendez asked Commissioners to answer Mr. Ybarra's question.

Chair Finke stated he would not like to settle on the maps until the Commissioners who have planned to meet have had an opportunity to meet.

Commissioner Thackston understood that SD-5 and CD-1B were still on the table.

Commissioner Mendez would like to meet with Commissioners from Districts 1, 5 and 8.

5. Adjournment

MOTION:

*Motion made by Vice-Chair Dominguez, seconded by Commissioner Karlsruher and
UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADJOURN AT 7:58PM.*